Teacher professional development activities in Africa: Insights from South African high school teachers’ experiences

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ABSTRACT

The significance of professional development in the educational system cannot be overstated as it has a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Furthermore, it has the potential to shape the classroom practices and performances of teachers. Teachers participate in diverse professional development endeavours to enhance their instructional methodologies. The efficacy of said activities is contingent upon their influence on pedagogical practices within the classroom. The process of selecting three department heads and five teachers from a pool of eight public high schools in the King Cetshwayo District of KwaZulu-Natal Province was conducted through purposive means. The present study employed a qualitative research methodology to gather data from a sample of economics teachers. Specifically, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with five teachers from each of the five schools. Additionally, a focus group interview was conducted with the three heads of departments (HoDs) from three high schools, which were selected based on convenience. The Andragogy theory served as a theoretical framework that formed the basis for the professional development activities of teachers. The data that was gathered has been presented thematically and through interpretation. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the insufficient and sporadic professional development opportunities they have participated in. The training sessions and workshops failed to cater to the specific requirements of the classroom and were conducted during hours that caused interference with their classroom engagements. The teachers expressed the belief that their professional requirements should be evaluated through consultation, assessment, or observation by senior teachers or Heads of Departments. It is recommended that teachers receive regular training and workshops on a termly basis, with sufficient support provided to ensure their attendance. Effective monitoring and follow-up procedures are imperative for the achievement of favourable outcomes in professional development.

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Introduction

The level of progress and advancement in a country is heavily impacted by the standard of education provided. In contemporary society, the acquisition of knowledge holds significant value for individuals as it enables them to stay informed and adaptive in a constantly evolving environment. This is particularly crucial for active participation in civic affairs and prompt responsiveness to emerging issues. Ensuring the professional growth and development of teachers is imperative for the provision of high-quality education in South Africa. Teachers engage in diverse professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing classroom practices. Various methods have been proposed to improve the instructional techniques of teachers. Nevertheless, certain endeavours have been deemed inadequate under certain circumstances, as per Metcalfe’s (2011) findings. According to Ryan (2007), South African teachers must receive frequent and high-quality professional development opportunities, like other professionals who regularly engage in such activities to enhance their effectiveness.

According to McMillan Education South Africa (2017), to ensure the effective delivery of curriculum, it is imperative that teachers, who serve as facilitators of learning, receive sufficient professional development opportunities. According to Steyn (2008), the status of fundamental education in South Africa highlights the challenges faced by teachers in effectively facilitating learning and enhancing
the academic achievements of learners. Steyn (2008) asserts that there is a need for teachers to enhance their classroom practices to facilitate the development of problem-solving skills among learners in the academic setting. The Department of Basic Education (2011) asserts that teachers bear the responsibility of enhancing their learners’ performance by improving their classroom teaching both individually and collectively.

The Department of Basic Education bears the primary obligation of ensuring that teachers are afforded diverse opportunities for continuing professional development initiatives aimed at improving their classroom practices. Therefore, the Department of Basic Education consistently creates diverse professional development initiatives for teachers, with limited attention given to the efficacy of said initiatives on the enhancement of teachers’ skills (Steyn, 2008). Robinson (2002) argues that the implementation of a uniform or cascade approach to professional development initiatives has been deemed inadequate in enhancing the instructional aptitude of teachers in South African secondary schools, and therefore, requires enhancement.

The standardised professional development activities that are designed to cater to a broad range of teachers do not effectively cater to the unique professional needs of individual teachers. This is because such an approach brings together teachers from diverse subject backgrounds and presents them with common knowledge and skills in a uniform manner. In contrast, a cascade model facilitates the dissemination of knowledge among teachers who participate in professional development activities. Teachers attending such events are encouraged to share the knowledge and skills they acquire with their colleagues upon their return to their respective schools. According to Fiske and Ladd’s (2004) findings, it is acknowledged that teachers utilising the cascade approach may encounter difficulties in effectively imparting knowledge and skills acquired during professional development activities. Therefore, it is possible that the cascade model may not be advantageous for other teachers.

Similarly, Ryan (2007) censures the utilisation of professional development initiatives solely aimed at acquainting teachers with new curriculum policies, without adequate instruction on subject pedagogy and classroom strategies that can enhance curriculum delivery and student achievement. According to Bowman and colleagues (2001), the professional development activities of teachers in South Africa are characterised by irregularity, inconsistency, and inadequacy in addressing their professional needs. The challenges associated with Professional development activities among teachers can be attributed to the fragmented structures of such programmes, inadequate evaluation of teachers to determine their professional requirements, insufficient feedback on the Professional development activities, and other factors (Archibald et al., 2011).

Elmore (2002) emphasises the importance of providing regular professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their ability to effectively carry out their professional responsibilities. The field of education is characterised by constant change and evolution, necessitating the ongoing development of teachers to meet the educational needs and desires of learners. Teachers are often viewed as a valuable source of knowledge, akin to an encyclopedia. According to Murphy (2002) and Rivero (2006), the duties of teachers in the classroom and the expectations of learners necessitate that teachers engage in professional development activities that are content-based, continuous, beneficial, and of long-term duration to enhance teaching and learning. Reeves (2006) asserts that a nation’s progress depends on the implementation of educational reforms and modifications, which teachers can help to facilitate by regularly taking part in Professional development initiatives. According to Ajani (2018), education plays a crucial role in the advancement of a nation, and the calibre of teachers within the educational system is a determining factor in the nation’s overall success.

The current research contributes to the discussion surrounding the enhancement of teachers’ skills and knowledge in South African and African educational institutions. This approach aims to address the limitations of current professional development initiatives and has the potential to improve pedagogical practices by effectively addressing the professional needs of participants. It is imperative to tailor professional development initiatives to meet the specific classroom requirements of teachers to effectively deliver the curriculum. The purpose of this study is to assist stakeholders in South African schools to contextualise professional development activities based on the diverse professional needs of teachers.

The following research questions served as a guide for the current study to accomplish its goals:

i. What do teachers think of the various professional development activities they attend?

ii. Do these existing professional development activities meet teachers’ classroom practices?

**Theoretical framework**

Theoretical frameworks offer a comprehensive comprehension of the theoretical foundations that serve as the basis for scientific investigations. The author has adopted a theoretical framework that characterises the fundamental nature of practical lived experiences, as professional development for teachers pertains to the acquisition of skills and knowledge that can augment their practical experiences within the classroom. Professional development encompasses a range of rigorous, ongoing, and structured initiatives aimed at improving pedagogical practices, student learning outcomes, and the overall educational milieu. The theoretical framework of this study is based on the principles of andragogy. The dynamic nature of learning necessitates that the entry-level knowledge and skills possessed by teachers are insufficient to sustain dynamic learning experiences within the school system. Therefore, teachers must remain informed and up-to-date regarding their professional obligations. The term "andragogy" is
commonly used to refer to the process of adult learning. This study employed the theory of andragogy as a framework to examine teacher professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing classroom practices, to comprehend their effectiveness in the education system.

Knowles (1984) developed the theory of andragogy as a means of facilitating active learning. The concept of andragogy pertains to the acquisition of novel knowledge by teachers in the context of professional development. According to this theoretical framework, the process of learning is characterised by the teacher assuming the role of an adult learner who possesses a certain level of maturity, a desire to enhance their teaching skills, and a preparedness to acquire new knowledge (Knowles, 1984).

![Figure 1: Principles of Andragogy (Knowles, 1984)](image)

According to Knowles (1984), there exist four fundamental assumptions that can facilitate effective learning among teachers as adult learners. The aforementioned propositions are:

Adult learners require a clear understanding of the relevance and purpose of the knowledge or skills they are expected to acquire. As adult learners, the teacher possesses a clear understanding of the objectives of their learning, which facilitates their ability to focus and fully engage in the acquisition of novel knowledge and skills. Gumbo (2020) asserts that participation in the activity rather than being present in the classroom is the driving force behind teachers’ attendance at professional development activities. This suggests that it is imperative to offer South African teachers’ opportunities for professional development that can enhance their instructional techniques and facilitate efficient curriculum dissemination.

The significance of experience in teaching and learning cannot be overstated, as it serves as a catalyst for learning. Direct participation or engagement in the process of knowledge acquisition by teachers instigates a propensity towards attaining enduring and expedited learning through their interactions with peers in various settings. The engagement of teachers in professional pursuits empowers them to actively participate in the development, formulation, and evaluation of educational encounters that can be conveyed to their students. The process of learning is perceived as a means of solving problems. The design of professional development activities ought to encompass a variety of engagements that facilitate collaboration, brainstorming, discussion, and teamwork among teachers. The principles of andragogy serve as the driving force behind the aforementioned engagements because they allow teachers to effectively involve their students in tasks that call for critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

The significance of the educational encounter promotes the utilisation or integration of PD endeavours as prompt advantages of the professional growth programme. Teachers seek to ascertain the advantages they can derive from participating in professional development programmes before their attendance (Gumbo, 2020). This statement suggests the justification for providing subject-specific professional development training to teachers with varying backgrounds. On the other hand, it is possible to evaluate the efficacy of professional development initiatives for teachers in South African schools by analysing their influence on the instructional techniques employed by teachers in the classroom. The attributes of the theory can be utilised to develop professional development initiatives that can augment the pedagogical practices and academic outcomes across all disciplines in South African educational institutions. This study aims to explore teachers’ insights on the impact of the existing professional development activities on teaching and learning in South African high schools.
Research and Methodology

The present study employs an interpretive methodology to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding Professional development initiatives (De Vos et al., 2005). The study's population comprised economics teachers and department heads in Empangeni and Richards Bay circuits, as well as Kwazulu-Natal Province in South Africa.

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to recruit a cohort of five economics teachers for a focus group interview, as well as three economics department heads for semi-structured interviews. The teachers were selected from a total of eight educational institutions. The analysis of qualitative data resulted in the generation of themes. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and subjected to qualitative analysis, which involved the coding process to generate categories and themes.

The research encompassed individuals from eight secondary educational institutions located in Empangeni and Richards Bay within the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. The participants were teachers from both rural and semi-urban high schools from King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa. The teachers were experienced teachers who have been teaching in high schools for many years. They have also been attending various professional development activities.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The present study presents an analysis of data collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with three Heads of Departments (HoDs) and a focus group interview with five economics teachers from different schools. The discussion is organised around the themes that emerged from the data analysis. The themes are presented as follows:

Various professional development initiatives for teachers

Professional development training is a common practice among South African teachers, who engage in various forms of training at different stages of their professional journey. The results of the study indicate that teachers participate in various forms of professional development to enhance their instructional practices within the classroom. Teachers have reported that the professional development opportunities they have participated in were categorised as either on-site or off-site. The off-site locations serve as venues for Professional development activities that teachers attend outside of their primary school premises. Typically, the department is in charge of planning these activities. Conversely, on-site Professional development activities occur within the teacher's school premises and are typically organised by the school. According to the testimony of Participant TR3, he has participated in various Professional development activities within the past four years. The respondent expressed the following statement:

*I have attended many workshops or activities on professional development in the last four years, I can say three workshops. One was held within my school, and the other two were held outside of my school (TR3).*

Similarly, another participant TR5 described various teachers’ professional development activities as either school-based or off-site based, which aimed at improving teachers’ classroom practices:

*I have participated in some CTPD activities in the last four years. Two of these were organised by our school SMT, and were within the school premises, while the Department also invited us to another two outside the school premises (TR5).*

HoD2 buttressed the claims of the participants on the different professional development activities available to teachers every year:

*I will start with outside the school, normally in the year, we have two workshops that are organized by the DoE, and in the school, we have got two, which is subject meetings, during which our department plan. This means four in all (HoD2).*

While another participant, HoD3 also substantiated that on-site and off-site based are forms of teachers’ professional development for South African teachers:

*We indeed attend workshops and other forms of activities to improve our teaching experiences. Some are being organized by our school principal and the Heads of Departments, which take place on the school premises, during school hours. The Department of Education also organises workshops for teachers, with our subject advisors, outside the school premises (HoD3).*

The results obtained from the study indicate the existence of Professional development initiatives aimed at teachers. The aforementioned activities align with the requirements of the South African Council for Teachers (2008), which mandates that teachers participate in professional development endeavours to accrue the necessary professional points for career advancement. The Department of Education (2007) advocates for the annual engagement of teachers in professional development activities to improve the academic outcomes of students in educational institutions. According to Gumbo's (2020) findings, South African teachers are offered a range of workshops, training sessions, and meetings aimed at enhancing their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK).

Nevertheless, a significant proportion of these workshops fail to satisfy the requirements of the participants. Dlamini and Mbatha (2018) assert that the current professional development programmes for teachers fail to sufficiently cater to their professional requirements. This statement aligns with Knowles’ (1984) proposition that andragogy empowers teachers to recognise professional development opportunities that facilitate adult learning and enhance their instructional practices.
The existing workshops/training are not regular

The teachers expressed concern regarding the frequency at which they participate in various professional development activities. The study's results indicate that teachers in South Africa engage in various Professional development initiatives. However, the inquiry remains as to the frequency of teachers' participation in such activities on an annual basis. The participants provided their responses regarding the annual frequency of their PD:

*There are different existing professional development activities that teachers can attend every year, but we only have access to these, maybe once or twice a year. To me, it is not regular and adequate to impact classroom practices. We need more workshops every term (TR5).*

Another participant emphasized the claims of TR5 further. The participants argued for increased participation in professional development for teachers every year. According to Participant TR2:

*We have many CTPD activities to attend every year. I have only attended three. One was within the school, while the two were off-site (TR2).*

The participants believed that more activities are needed for the professional development of teachers, especially to support their classroom practices. Hence, a plead for an increase in the frequency of professional development activities was made by participant TR3:

*I think we should be given access to more than what we are getting now. Sometimes we only attend two, one in the school and one by the Department (TR3).*

Participants argued that more activities are needed to support their classroom practices. The need for regular activities is due to the dynamic nature of learning across the globe. So, teachers need more professional development activities every year. Their participation will improve teaching and learning in the school system. Participant HoD2 expressed:

*The numbers of workshops or professional development activities that are available to teachers are not adequate. So, I think there is a need for the school to organize more workshops for teachers, while the Department must also increase the number of workshops for teachers (HoD2).*

Similarly, Participant HoD1 also said that the attendance of teachers at PD activities frequently will enhance classroom practices of teachers:

*If the subject advisors can be organizing it often, it will make it easy for us to understand the topics and make learners understand the subject content as well (HoD1).*

As per the respondents, the Professional development opportunities that are currently available are significantly insufficient. According to Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015), there are various reasons why teachers do not frequently engage in these activities. According to a longitudinal study conducted by Darling-Harmood, Hyler, and Gardner (2017), teachers must engage in regular Professional development activities to attain and maintain high-quality education. According to Ajani (2018), individuals must enhance their expertise and proficiency in their respective areas of specialisation using consistent and high-quality training. Fareo (2013) posits that the efficacy and productivity of teachers' classroom practices are contingent upon the provision of sufficient and consistent Professional development activities within each academic year. The results indicate that there is a need to enhance the current professional development initiatives for teachers to augment their participation. According to Knowles (1984), it is imperative for teachers, who are also adult learners, to consistently participate in learning opportunities that can enhance their classroom practices and elevate their professional skills.

Subject-designed content workshops

The interviews conducted with teachers revealed their perspectives on the appropriate content and emphasis for Professional development activities. According to the participants, the materials provided did not meet their specific classroom requirements in terms of adequacy and appropriateness. A participant expressed the following statement:

*The professional development programme encompasses a multitude of directives that guide the actions to be taken. The curriculum units that will be taught have been assigned to experienced teachers who will guide instructional strategies. Additionally, an analysis of the outcomes will be conducted (TR2).*

TR1, another participant, expressed that certain aspects of PD activities are not beneficial. Participants emphasised the importance of PD that focuses on situational analysis of classroom practices, and how it can enhance teaching methodologies and improve student outcomes. This is what he had to say:

*We generally begin with the analysis of the results, which I believe is irrelevant and not helpful; we spend the entire day analysing provincial and national outcomes. What we require is content for what we teach. How they can concentrate on these issues through lesson studies on how to teach the subject (TR1).*
It has been observed that certain topics within the Grade 12 subject curriculum may pose a challenge for some teachers due to their lack of comfort with said topics. Considering this, participant HoD1 suggests that lesson study, facilitated by experienced teachers, could prove beneficial in addressing these difficulties and equipping fellow teachers with the necessary skills to effectively teach these topics.

Most of the time, especially when teaching grade 12, teachers expect to be assisted with lectures on tough themes such as a multiplier, national income, public sector, and so on, but they are frequently disappointed with other things in the workshops (HoD1).

The enhancement of teachers’ professional development ought to facilitate their classroom practices to enable them to perform optimally. HoD2, one of the participants, conveyed the notion that each teacher requires professional development opportunities that cater to their specific professional requirements.

Professional development should undoubtedly enhance and improve classroom teaching, but it becomes an issue if the topics are inappropriate for teachers or do not fit their unique needs. A generic training for teachers, for example, may not address their specific topic demands (HoD2).

According to Gumbo (2020), the efficacy of professional development is perceived by participants to be contingent upon the substance of the professional development activities. The study’s results indicate that the current Professional development (PD) programmes for teachers encompass a variety of topics, including but not limited to, analysis of outcomes, pedagogical strategies, and specific subject matter content. Teachers recommended that the substance of PD endeavours should concentrate on the subject matter being taught in the classroom, complex topics that pose difficulties, and the expectations for learners in their matriculation examinations. Archibald et al. (2011) posit that the effectiveness of PD hinges on the provision of suitable content for teachers, content that can enhance the teaching and learning processes within the educational system. This statement aligns with Knowles’ (1984) theory of andragogy, which suggests that the content of professional development activities should be based on the classroom needs of teachers. According to Ravhuhali et al. (2015), it is suggested that the evaluation of teachers is necessary to determine the appropriate design of Professional development activities for them. In developed nations, it is customary to tailor teacher professional development programmes and workshops to align with their professional requirements (Darling-Hammond, 2017). The statement suggests that the implementation of uniform professional development initiatives in South Africa fails to adequately cater to the diverse professional requirements of individuals (Ajani, 2019).

**Lack of necessary follow-up on teachers’ attendance at workshops or other PD**

It is imperative to provide appropriate follow-up measures to support and incentivize teachers. Teachers seek the backing of the school administration in facilitating their instructional and educational endeavours. It is imperative to implement a follow-up protocol for teaching and learning activities. The Head of Department 1 conveyed a deficiency in consistent monitoring of teachers who participated in Professional development (PD) initiatives, as per his statement.

The Department of Education conducts follow-up procedures to verify the implementation of the topics covered in the workshops. School inspectors conduct periodic visits to schools, typically at least once per academic term, to assess various aspects of the educational programme. These assessments may include an evaluation of the curriculum coverage, the quality of learners’ notes, and the maintenance of other relevant files and records. However, these follow-ups are not adequate or regular in most cases (HoD1).

The participants underscored the importance of consistent monitoring of teachers’ professional growth. HoD3 acknowledged that subject advisors conduct follow-up visits but noted that such visits are not consistently scheduled.

The subject advisors visit the educational institution to conduct an assessment. The individuals in question engage in a process of monitoring by verifying the authenticity and accuracy of various materials, including documents and educational resources. However, it has been noted that their oversight of activities related to Individual Professional Development (PD) is not consistently conducted (HoD3).

The results obtained from the study participants indicate that there is a lack of consistent monitoring of teachers’ attendance at professional development (PD) events and implementation of corresponding changes in their instructional approaches (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015; Dlamini & Mbatha, 2018; Chigonga & Mutodi, 2019). According to Birman, Desimone, Porter, and Garet (2000), the effectiveness of teacher professional development in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning is contingent upon adequate monitoring and follow-up of teachers who participate in such training. According to Knowles (1984), the goal of this is to ensure the application of knowledge or skills gained from the aforementioned training. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), the practice of monitoring or conducting follow-ups on teachers both before and after their participation in training or workshops can facilitate the evaluation of their performance and identification of additional professional development needs. According to Chigonga and Mutodi (2019), it is imperative to enhance the monitoring and follow-up procedures for teachers who participate in workshops, to assess the efficacy of such training sessions and their impact on classroom practices. Chigonga and Mutodi (2019) assert that implementing these measures will enhance the efficacy of training and workshop coordination.
PD provides knowledge and skills that can enhance classroom practices

The primary objective of Professional development for teachers is to enhance their classroom practices and elevate the academic performance of their students. The respondents conveyed their perspectives that diverse PD endeavours have enhanced their instructional methodologies within the classroom setting. Participant TR1 expressed enthusiasm regarding the positive impact of PD activities on their classroom practices, noting significant personal benefits:

Yes, they have enhanced my teaching. In the past, I was a teacher who did not break down learning, but today I do so to help my students learn things deeper. They emphasise in our PD that we must always explain learning to our learners. Additionally, before attending PD, I was not very good at teaching graphs, but now I am. I can now affirm that my students have a solid understanding of graphs. I’ve received help in how I interact with students while I teach. I revise how I describe the graph (TR1)

Participant TR2 agreed with TR1 PD activities improved his confidence as a teacher:

My students are thrilled because they can now connect what they learn in their textbooks to the outside world, and I can now confidently teach economics to them. Consequently, it was beneficial (T2).

Similarly, participant TR3 also believes that various PD activities have contributed to his classroom performance:

Through this PD, I have learned a great deal and gained a lot of experience. Now that I understand economics, I can relate to current events (TR3).

According to Knowles (1984), the primary objective of adult education is to acquire knowledge that is advantageous to learners. This statement suggests that the motivation of teachers as adult learners lies in the acquisition of training and workshops that can improve the teaching and learning of diverse subjects. Chigonga and Mutodi (2019) conducted a longitudinal study in which they asserted that the cascade model of professional training and workshops for teachers is designed to enhance their classroom teaching. According to Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen’s (2015) research, a significant number of South African teachers express dissatisfaction with the quality of professional development opportunities and workshops they have participated in, as they feel that these activities have not adequately improved their classroom practices. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), most professional development opportunities and workshops provided to teachers improve their classroom practices. Teachers are actively engaged in contextualising learning experiences for their students. According to Gumbo (2020), the provision of training and workshops that can effectively aid teachers in delivering the curriculum is advantageous to the education system.

Inconvenient timing of PD activities

Professional development (PD) activities are scheduled for teachers at various intervals throughout the year. The perceptions of teachers regarding the convenience of these PD activities were found to vary among them. Participant TR5 conveyed discontent regarding the temporal arrangement of professional development (PD) activities, which are scheduled at inopportune times for teachers to depart from their academic responsibilities or abandon their learners:

Sometimes they call us during very busy times when we are supposed to revise with the learners and tell us that we need to attend this PD, which is very difficult to leave the learners in the school and attend this PD, so I wish they could help us to attend this PD at the beginning or end of the term (TR5).

Participant TR4 also concurred that there were times when attending a PD event was inconvenient for teachers during busy school hours:

Another issue we have is that they sometimes call us to attend workshops during school hours, and principals may not allow us to leave the schools, so you discover that attendance is low simply because teachers are not there (TR4).

It is imperative to schedule professional development activities promptly for teachers. According to Knowles (1984), adult learners who are teachers possess a clear understanding of the knowledge and skills they require to enhance their classroom practices, as well as the reasons and timing for acquiring such knowledge. According to Darling-Hammond (2017), teachers place a high value on the most effective scheduling of workshops and training sessions throughout the academic year. In contrast, several teachers in South Africa express dissatisfaction not only with the insufficiency of their training and workshops but also with the inopportune scheduling of the current offerings (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015; Chigonga & Mutodi, 2019; Gumbo, 2020). Teachers prefer to attend workshops or training that can improve their classroom practices, but these activities must be well-planned for them Ajani, 2022). According to the participants, workshops are better designed for teachers during school holidays. This will not take teachers away from classrooms.

Adequate duration for each PD activity

The continuous development of teachers’ professional skills is a lifelong endeavour that requires a diverse range of activities. These activities should include extended periods to facilitate comprehensive learning, opportunities for interaction, and other supportive measures that can enhance teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom. The study’s participants conveyed their concerns regarding the
feasibility of PD activities that are limited to a single day. Participant TR3 articulated a desire for extended professional development opportunities for teachers:

I believe it should be done at the beginning and end of the term. And it cannot be only one day; I believe two days will suffice to cover everything that will be covered in that term (TR3).

Participant TR4 agreed with the notion of extending the duration of content-based Professional development (PD) sessions. This was attributed to the belief that teachers require a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter to effectively improve their instructional methods. Professional development endeavours must be allocated sufficient time to enable teachers to establish connections, exchange ideas, establish professional relationships, and cooperate on pertinent assignments and information that will prove advantageous to them:

Professional development for teachers should be more than a one-day workshop, especially when it comes to hard things that are hard for us to teach. We need more time to watch and learn from the lessons of other, more experienced teachers who can help us in these tough areas. So, you can see that we need time if we want to learn a lot from the PD events (TR4).

Participants agreed with the notion that content-based professional development should be of long duration. The participants argued that this is necessary to ensure that teachers acquire a deep understanding of the subject matter that can ultimately improve their instructional delivery in the classroom. Professional development activities must be allocated sufficient time to enable teachers to establish connections, exchange ideas, establish professional relationships, and cooperate on pertinent tasks and knowledge that will prove advantageous to them. Thus, the professional development activities for teachers ought to extend beyond a one-day workshop, particularly in instances where teachers are required to instruct challenging subjects that pose difficulties in teaching. In the words of another participant:

Additional time is required to observe the lesson study conducted by seasoned teachers who can guide in challenging areas. Sufficient time is required to effectively observe numerous lessons during the PD activities (TR4).

The results of the study indicate that certain components of teachers' professional development initiatives may require a long duration, even beyond a day. It is imperative to comprehend the rationale behind the necessity for teachers to acquire knowledge and the optimal approach for teachers to acquire knowledge that will be advantageous to their students. Teachers advocate for extended PD activities to facilitate the attainment of essential knowledge and competencies from said activities. According to Ajani (2018), it is imperative to allocate sufficient time for teachers' professional development activities to facilitate their comprehension and engagement in the training. According to Gumbo (2020), it is recommended that teacher training or workshops be structured over an extended duration to effectively address various classroom requirements and allow sufficient time for the professional development of teachers.

According to Darling-Harmond's (2017) research, there is a positive correlation between the length of teachers' training or workshops and the improvement of their classroom practices. The results of the study indicate that certain components of teachers' professional development initiatives may require a duration exceeding 24 hours. It is imperative to comprehend the rationale behind the necessity for teachers to acquire knowledge and the optimal approach for them to acquire knowledge that will be advantageous to their students. Teachers have expressed a desire for extended PD (interprofessional development) activities to facilitate the attainment of essential knowledge and competencies from said activities. According to Ajani (2018), it is imperative to allocate sufficient time for teachers' professional development activities to enable them to comprehend and actively engage in the training. According to Gumbo (2020), it is recommended that teacher training and workshops be designed to span a significant duration to effectively address various classroom requirements and allow sufficient time for the professional development of teachers. According to Darling-Harmond (2017), there is a positive correlation between the length of teachers' training or workshops and the improvement of their classroom practices.

**PD activities can help create and contextualise learning and teaching materials**

The professional development activities of teachers can be utilised to create or enhance learning and teaching support materials (LTSM) that are tailored to accommodate the unique characteristics and distinctions of individual learners and schools. The respondents reported that PD has facilitated the production and instruction of Long-Term Strategic Maps (LTSM) for their pedagogical endeavours. The participant identified as TR 2 provided the following statement:

Yes, certain things are shared freely with us during workshops, however during a large teachers’ gathering, you see some teaching and learning materials that some publishers shade to sell, so if you have the money, you buy (TR2)

Another participant, TR4, believed strongly that PD activities can promote creativity in teachers’ use of LTSM:

At our cluster meeting, we strive to create or discuss what resources to use and how to teach each topic to the benefit of the students. I’ve learned to be creative in designing teaching and learning resources for my students as a result of this information. We can also seek help on any part of the issue there (TR4).
Incorporating diverse instructional resources and techniques into classroom pedagogy can aid teachers in promoting effective learning outcomes and facilitating students' rapid assimilation of educational content. The participant identified as TR5 provided the following statement:

To be honest, I have participated in PD activities where materials that assisted me in teaching some difficult topics were shared with us; for those that we couldn’t get, we were taught how to improvise the materials, using the learners to produce these materials; as a result, the classes became so interesting and learning was overwhelmingly achieved in my learners (TR5).

According to another participant, identified as TR4, PD endeavours facilitate the cultivation of creativity in the context of TLSM designs for educational institutions:

During our cluster’s meetings, we engage in the process of designing and brainstorming instructional materials and strategies that would effectively facilitate the learning process for our students. Based on this acquired knowledge, I have developed the ability to employ creativity in the creation of instructional materials that cater to the needs of my students. One may also seek aid on any facet of the subject matter therein (TR4).

The results obtained from the participants indicated that engaging in PD activities yields significant advantages for teachers. The teachers have been furnished with instructional and educational resources pertinent to their respective disciplines, in addition to receiving training on innovative and adaptive pedagogical techniques. The significance of instructional materials in the pedagogical practices of teachers is emphasised by Egbo (2011). These materials not only alleviate the burden of teaching for teachers but also facilitate expedited learning for students and foster an engaging and interactive classroom environment. According to Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015), the provision of professional training and workshops can offer significant advantages to teachers in creating instructional materials that are capable of catering to the requirements of a wide range of learners. According to Darling-Harmond (2017), workshops and training sessions have facilitated the ease of lesson preparation for teachers. This has enabled them to tailor learning experiences to the specific contexts of their learners.

The results obtained from the study participants indicate that engaging in PD activities yields significant advantages for teachers. The teachers have been furnished with instructional and educational resources pertinent to their respective disciplines and have undergone training on innovative and adaptive pedagogical approaches. The significance of instructional materials in the pedagogical approaches of teachers is emphasised by Egbo (2011). These materials not only alleviate the burden of teaching for teachers but also expedite the learning process for students and enhance the dynamism and engagement of classroom environments. According to Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015), the provision of professional training and workshops can offer significant advantages to teachers in creating instructional materials that are capable of catering to the requirements of a wide range of learners. According to Darling-Harmond (2017), professional development opportunities such as workshops and training have facilitated the process of lesson planning by empowering teachers to tailor learning experiences to the unique contexts of their students.

Inadequate or lack of learning materials for the learners to support PD

The utilisation of suggested learning resources, including textbooks, writing materials, and other educational materials, by students, enhances the efficacy of PD initiatives within classroom settings. The perspectives of teachers regarding the appropriate utilisation of said materials by students indicated that most students are unable to procure or furnish resources that would facilitate their learning. One of the challenges that hinder the effectiveness of PD in schools, as identified by Participant HoD1, is the insufficiency of resources available for learners.

Sometimes, learners need necessary materials like books and other materials to support teachers’ efforts in the classroom. We must put together notes for them and make copies from books for them. In short, we don’t have enough resources (HoD1).

Participant HoD2 emphasised that the insufficiency of resources for learners continues to pose a significant obstacle to the efficacy of PD implementation in classrooms:

Specifically, the lack of adequate resources hinders the progress of instructional activities and impedes the achievement of desired learning outcomes. This presents a significant challenge. The lack of necessary materials poses a hindrance to the successful execution of our work, rendering it difficult to adhere to the planned schedule. Additionally, a significant proportion of learners are unable to procure the required materials due to financial constraints (HoD2).

Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015) have identified a constraint that hinders the efficacy of professional development initiatives in South Africa, which is the inadequacy of resources. Gumbo (2020) asserts that the lack of resources poses a challenge for teachers in applying the knowledge and skills acquired during training and workshops in actual classroom settings. According to Dlamini and Mbatha’s (2018) study, the South African Teachers’ Union asserts that due to inadequate resources in most schools, teachers face challenges in integrating the learning experiences gained from various workshops they attend. According to Knowles (1984), it is imperative to furnish adult learners with all essential resources that can facilitate their learning experiences. This suggests that adult learners are incentivized to engage in the learning process when provided with adequate resources that align with their learning objectives.
Conclusion

Professional development for teachers is an ongoing and methodical approach aimed at improving classroom methodologies and achieving or sustaining a high-quality educational system. It is imperative to ensure that teachers possess adequate pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in all subjects through regular and appropriate content-based professional development and workshops. The present study’s research inquiries have unveiled the diverse viewpoints of teachers concerning the extant professional development initiatives for teachers in high schools situated in South Africa. According to the teachers, the current PD activities have not sufficiently met their classroom requirements. As a result, they have recommended a revamp of the training and workshops to be conducted on a termly basis, focusing on specific subjects or chapters to be taught. The participants expressed their belief that engaging in PD activities can yield substantial advantages for their classroom practices, teaching skills, and methodologies. According to the teachers, the scheduling of PD activities at inappropriate times, such as during regular school hours, has a detrimental impact on their instructional delivery in the classroom. The teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the current mechanisms in place for monitoring their professional development endeavours.

Implications for current reforms

To enhance teachers' classroom practices through professional development activities, it is imperative to restructure such activities to provide adequate support for teachers. Initially, the Department of Education and other relevant stakeholders should undertake a restructuring of the current Professional development initiatives to prioritise the pedagogical requirements of teachers within the classroom setting. The primary objective of professional development is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, thereby leading to improved academic outcomes for learners. Hence, it is recommended that professional development initiatives prioritise the content that teachers are expected to impart in each academic term across all levels and classes.

To accomplish this objective, it is imperative to evaluate teachers to ascertain their specific classroom requirements. Additionally, it is recommended that teachers who participate in diverse professional development programmes receive subsequent training and ongoing assistance. Therefore, it is imperative to maintain consistency in follow-up procedures after participation in professional development activities. In addition, it is imperative to furnish teachers with instructional resources that can augment their pedagogical approaches within the classroom setting. It is recommended that the School Management Team (SMT) provide funding for teachers to participate in training activities.

The study concludes by suggesting that there should be a rise in the frequency of teacher workshops and training activities, with a recommendation that such events be held on a termly basis. It is recommended that the government and stakeholders ensure the provision of sufficient teaching and learning resources for teachers and students alike.

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